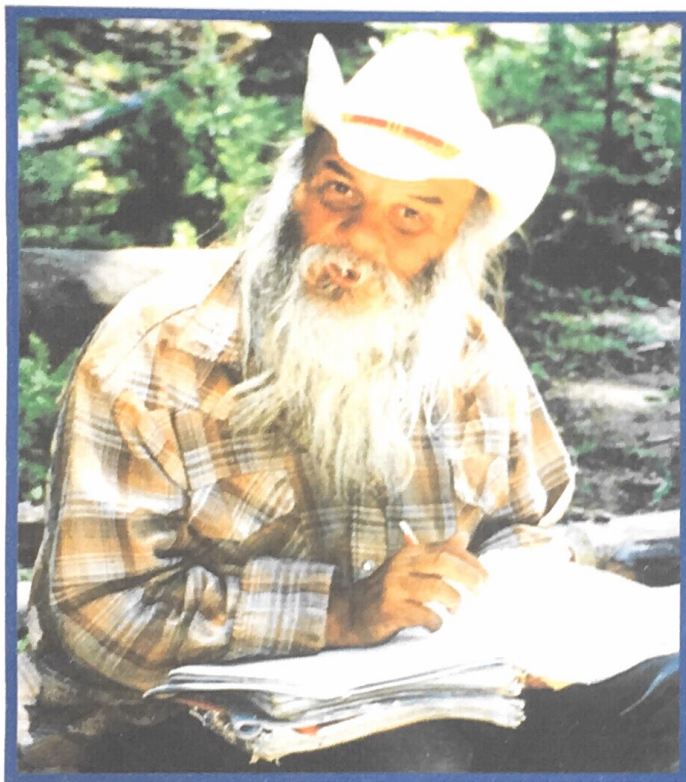


Rainbow Family Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.
Scanned in 2018.
Jodey Bateman may be
contacted on Facebook.*

04.J MICHAEL BEAR "This Family Is the Only Way
I Can Live"

- interviewed at the Rainbow Farm
the summer of 1982

5 pages

[04.J]

MICHAEL BEAR This Family Is the Only Way I Can Live

[Although Barry, Sunny and Chuck Windsor are all of working class origin, their encounter with the left wing did not come from their own experience as working class people on the job and in their own neighborhoods. As Sunny says, they met up with radical politics in "a different world" from the one they grew up in, after they started hanging out in college fringe areas.

Michael Bear comes from Old Left parents who saw working class people in their role on the job as the major force to transform society. To them, labor unions were almost a holy cause. What is notable is how very little of all this was passed on to Michael Bear. The same thing is true of Jayson, who also has a left-wing working class heritage. Michael Bear's parents and Jayson's grandfather did not talk much about their beliefs, but simply tried to pass on personal values. When Michael Bear and Jayson both volunteered to fight in Southeast Asia, they had very little sense of any family opposition to their decision. What radicalization either one of them has had started with their experiences in the war.

In general left-wing working class people don't seem to talk about their beliefs as much as college leftists. They can't afford losing their jobs or the legal costs to meet official harassment. They don't want to pass these troubles on to their children. They simply hope their children will rise to a higher level of society or assume they will be radicalized on the job. For more on this, see the life stories of Jayson and Sarra. Michael Bear is not the same as STP Bear.]

I was born in Boston August 19, 1940 - a triple Leo. On my birth certificate I'm Michael Antonino Giuseppe di Giorgio. I lived in a neighborhood like a ghetto - only instead of poor blacks, it was all poor Italians. My father came over from Italy in the Thirties to avoid the draft there. My mother is Jewish. I had an older brother and sister. My mother had a hysterectomy after I was born. My father was a dry cleaner. He had been a union organizer. He died

in 1977. My parents were not religious. They were Communists. I didn't know that until I was 16 and I wanted to join the FBI and my parents told me All I knew before that was there were certain books I was supposed to take off the living room table when we had visitors.

I was poor. I got into trouble. My father wanted to put me away because I wouldn't cut my sideburns when I was 13. My parents moved to Los Angeles when I was 16. My uncle set my dad up in business as a dry cleaner. I got arrested for a burglary just before I was 16. I went into California Youth Authority. I got out in 1958. In 1960, I got busted on a

GTA - Grand Theft Auto charge. I got out on parole in 1961. In June, 1963, I was drafted - I was arrested and the judge said I would go in the service or else.

After about seven months in the Army, I volunteered for Special Forces training. Then I volunteered to go to Laos as an adviser. I got stoned for the first time in my life with the Hmong mountain tribes - they had a bong. I had a lot of guilt trips come down on me for the atrocities I was involved in committing. I was wounded and sent back to an Army hospital in Long Beach. I got out of the service in 1965.

I lived in Berkeley and got involved in the anti-war movement. I got into LSD. In '66 I moved to San Francisco. I was working with Atlantic Records as a recording engineer, a sound mixer. Around that time I decided one day to just give it up. I couldn't handle it any longer. I hung out with some friends who later became part of the old Family Dog. I got the best job of my life as a janitor in the Avalon Ballroom. I was never without drugs, I swept up so much LSD.

I met Barry Plunker in January, 1967 at the Human Be-in that they had when LSD was declared illegal. I didn't see Barry for some time after that.

Then in 1968 when things in San Francisco started going really shitty - from LSD to smack and speed, I went back to Berkeley. I got very politically involved - SDS [Students for a Democratic Society]. I got fed up with the Berkeley scene and headed for the East coast with some friends of mine. We hung out at a place called Ohayo Mountain before the Woodstock Festival in 1969 with the Ohayo Mountain Road Family. I met up with the old Hog Farmers and went back with them to California.

In Big Sur I met with Barry Plunker again. We were part of the Salmon Creek Family in Big Sur - about ten of us. The local sheriff was really down on the freaks. We had redneck problems. We were strapping guns for a while. Barry had to take my back in a bar when we had to walk over a bunch of boar hunters who were hassling us. He can take my back any time.

We were figuring we should leave anyways, but we figured we should stay together as a family, so Randy's dad gave him a lot of money and we went to Eugene, Oregon. Then we decided to go to Washington. Julie, Randy's wife, put her finger on the map of Washington and it landed on the Skagit Valley at a little town called Marble Mount.

So we wound up in Marble Mount. We found a beautiful ten acre place and stayed there almost a year. During the time, there was a little dissension in the family between those who wanted to do a survival trip and those who wanted to do a farm trip. Those of us who wanted to do the survival trip went into the mountains. We became known as the Outlaw Tribe of Marble Mount.

We included Chuck Windong, who was called Arjes Chuck then, Leika Fawn and Harold, who was the one who put me on the path. We had horses and mules and took draft dodgers across to Canada - an Underground Railroad.

We went to a street fair in Bellingham, Washington, and met this little Jewish guy named Garrick with a big nose and a loud voice who was getting people to jump off a tower into people's arms - trust.

We invited him and he came back to Marble Mount with us. I thought he was crazy in those days.

He went back to Portland. We didn't hear from him for two months. Then we got a letter from him about a two week festival that was going to happen near Portland called Vortex. He invited us to come. We went down to Vortex. It was actually the first West Coast gathering of all the tribes. We had a tipi circle there. We were

taking care of lost children. We had a Space Travel Lodge for people who needed to come home from trips. During this time, Barry was rapping about getting together all the tribes in Colorado for a spiritual gathering, not a rock festival.

Garrick was talking about a farm. He invited us to Rainbow Farm when he set it up. There were no buildings but the main house where we got here. There were ten grown-ups and five kids. We didn't want to be too open, but we never turned anyone away. I was living with a lady named Terri. I had a kid by her.

Barry came by with a huge school bus. I traveled with him in the bus to invite people to the gathering. During this time I broke up with Terri and I started hanging out with a lady named JoAnne. I came back to the farm in spring, 1972 and I stayed here until 1974 with JoAnne until our son Joshua was born. In 1974, JoAnne and I left the farm and went to Takelma, Oregon and bought some land at O'Brien, outside of Takelma. I didn't go to another gathering until 1978, the Oregon Gathering.

In 1979, I was the victim of a cultivation bust. I got two years' probation. My world fell apart. The heaviest relationship I ever had came to an end. My old lady left. I cut my hair and beard and went to Portland and drove a cab. I made enough money to pay off all my debts to my lawyers. Then after the Washington Gathering I moved back here to Rainbow Farm.

I plan on building a home here on the farm. This family has been very dear to me for 11 years. It's the only way I

201

can live my life. I'm 41 years old and I can't live any other way.

[This interview was done at Rainbow Farm in February, 1982. In the summer of 1982, Michael Bear - also known as Michael Bison Bear - was paralyzed in a diving accident in California. Rainbow people stay in steady touch with him.]

As a small additional note, the Apple Annie bus, famous in Rainbow, is named for Michael Bear's former girlfriend Jo Anne.]